

GAS Letter for July 2019 Intercession Paper

Dear Fellow Members of the Guild:

The July number of our Intercession Paper always begins with us looking forward to our Annual Requiem in November, and I hope that all who can will make plans to be with us for the next Annual Requiem at The Church of the Advent, Beacon Hill in Boston, on Saturday, 9 November 2019 at 11.00 a.m. I am quite sure that their fully professional choir under the direction of Mark Dwyer, which is justly renowned, will be more than up to the task of providing edifying and beautiful music to the glory of God and in prayer for our dead, and this year he has chosen Tomás Luis de Victoria's *Missa pro defunctis cum sex vocibus (1605)*, a work very much exemplary of their repertory. A luncheon will be served afterwards in the Advent's very attractive parish hall for those minded and able to remain. We have often met at the Advent in the past, and as recently as 2014, when Father Warren was our gracious host. Father remains on the Guild's Council, and long may he wave, but has retired as Rector of the Advent, and living on the North Shore (having lived among the locals for many years as a schoolboy, I know their lingo). The Advent is now in a vacancy, but is being well served by its large and active congregation, and for clerical purposes, among others, by my friend and former classmate at The General Seminary, Father Jay James. The home team will be their Sacred Ministers and servers, which we find is generally the best policy in these situations. Our custom has been for some years that in alternating years, a member of the Council preaches, and then in the alternate years the congregation must be contented with your humble servant. Last year, Father Godderz, Rector of All Saints Ashmont and Master of the SSC in the Americas was our select preacher in Brooklyn, so this year it falls to me to deliver what St Paul might have called "a word to the Church in Boston". Not only do we look forward to returning to the Advent to see the friends many of us have there, to join their very memorable and affecting solemn worship, but also to affirm our connections and support for them in this time of transition, and to make clear to them our fervent prayers for their ongoing witness to the Catholic Faith as we have received it from the beginning from the Apostles in the upper room on Whitsunday, who passed on exactly what they had learnt and been taught by Our Lord Himself. They were faithful to their vocation, and so was the next generation of apostles like S. Clement, S. Polycarp, S. Ignatius, and the next, and the next, down to ourselves. It is this precious gift of Tradition that makes us who we are, Catholic Christians, and determines what we believe, how we act, how we pray, how we love, what we prize.

I wish to note the deaths of two members of the Guild, both women religious, both members of communities whose members are, *ipso facto*, members of our Guild.

The Sister Mary Angela of the Community of St Mary. Sister Mary Angela died Easter Thursday, 25 April aged 96, in the 39th year of her religious profession. She was a member of the Church of the Resurrection, New York, for many years before entering St Mary's Convent (then still at Peekskill) as a later vocation. She served there, also as Guest Mistress of the Retreat House in Peekskill, and at the House of the Holy Redeemer at Fifth Avenue and 95th Street, then staffed by the Sisters of St Mary, easily recognisable for their distinctive "swan wing" headdress. I knew her well both as Guest Mistress welcoming the SSC Retreats in Peekskill for some years, and also when she joined the Mission Team with Father Augustine Hoey, CR, and others at S. Clement's Philadelphia in 1992, when I was Rector-elect. Every time I saw Sister after I came here in 2001, she asked closely about Resurrection and it was very clear that she held it near to her heart. She had had a very responsible career in the world before she joined the Community, and once, in my presence, she was asked if it had been a great difference to move from that to being a Sister of St Mary (the enquirer obviously thinking it might have been a diminution). Sister replied, "Oh, of course, it was so much wider, and so much more significant and important!". *Jesu mercy, Mary pray.*

The Rev'd Mother Virginia of All Saints also died Easter Thursday, 25 April aged 103, in the 76th year of her religious profession. Mother Virginia was the legendary Mother Superior of the All Saints Sisters, who remained the most traditional in liturgy, rule, and garb of any women's community in the Episcopal Church. She became Mother Superior in 1952 and remained so until 1988. It was decided by the Community that

she would retain the style and title of "Mother" in view of her long service in that position. She lived to see four successors! The All Saints Sisters had served at S. Clement's Philadelphia since 1880, and ran St Anna's Home for Aged Women there for over a hundred years. The clergy of S. Clement's provided sacramental ministrations there with a weekly mass and visits to the ladies resident. I also served as Confessor Extraordinary to the Sisters visiting their Convent in Catonsville, Maryland, at regular intervals for a time, and conducted our annual parish retreats there. Mother Virginia and I assisted Father Augustine Hoey, CR, in a mission at St Paul's, Norwalk, Conn., in 1990. There were several of us on the Mission Team, including me at age 31, and another priest, about ten years older. Our host Rector, Father Timothy Campbell-Smith SSC, suggested in a meeting that perhaps we should structure things so that Mother Virginia (who did not drive, and was already 72) might concentrate more on talking to people at and after the nightly mission services, rather than go about making home calls as we other two were. "Nonsense," she replied crisply, and took the list of some 80 households, divided them in thirds, and had it copied. "Surely there is no reason I should do any less than the other two," and that was very much the end of that. Mother Virginia learnt the bus routes of Norwalk and Westport and ended up making more calls than either me or the other priest. Towards the end of her life, the Community took the decision to make their corporate submission to the Holy See, and only Mother Virginia and one other sister remained Anglican. The other sister eventually also joined the Roman Church, but Mother Virginia remained. I understand their actions, and judge no one for what he feels he must do in this very difficult atmosphere, but with the death of Mother Virginia, the All Saints Sisters, the community with which my relations were so close and of such long standing, has ceased to exist. There is a new creation, and it may do great things for God, but it is only natural for us to regret what we have lost. She will, obviously, be the last All Saints Sister who is a member of the Guild in this world, and the final new addition to those in the next. I cannot but think her sisters on the other side, many of them my friends (Sisters Ethelwyn, Barbara, Hilary, Lucy, Ellen Elizabeth, Jane Teresa, and others too numerous to name), will be heartened to have her on their continuing pilgrimage with them or, perhaps, joining them straightaway at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb. *Jesu mercy, Mary pray.*

We think, naturally, in the Guild about our prayers for the dead, and so we ought, as this is our great spiritual work of mercy and our promise. We try to keep our attention focused on our promises and say the prayers we have undertaken to offer. A lovely lady at The Church of St Mary the Virgin in Times Square in which I served my title said of Requiem Masses and prayers for the dead, "Sometimes I think it's the only prayer I make that isn't selfish!" What we do not always think of, however, is that of all the souls we have prayed for who are journeying to God, there must be thousands now (if we consider the whole Guild since 1873 in Britain and in this country) who have reached their goal: him who is both the Good Shepherd of the sheep and the Lamb of God, true God and true Man, the Priest of Love who made himself the victim of his own sacrifice.

T. S. Eliot says

the communication

Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.

I imagine that must be true. Think of all the time we waste talking nonsense and rubbish, the inconsequential doings of "famous" people, trivial entertainment, gossip, nasty and vicious communication, and things so utterly insignificant or inane that they are not worth the time and energy to say them. The dead have their attention brought to focus, like a laser, on what matters, their own pilgrimage through purification to perfection, and when it has been attained, the worship of the Holy Trinity forever in Heaven and their intercession for those of us still in our pilgrimage on earth, or those in purgatory. In this Easter season as I write, Death is revealed, not as a full stop, but as the way into another dimension of life. Eliot again:

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.

When I write you in November for the January number of the Intercession Paper, it is just after the Requiem Mass of the Guild and the many Requiems that take place in my church every November, day in and out. When I write you for the July number, it is always in Eastertide and this year, just barely so. It has occurred to me just now, and not for the first time, that it's all the same – Requiems and Eastertide are two sides of the same coin. We are all engaged on the same journey and if we remain committed to it as best we can, it follows Our Lord's: Bethlehem to Mount Calvary, to the hill of the Ascension and to Heaven itself. Our pilgrimage is meant to be the same: birth to death to life after death and then, we pray, to Heaven itself, our true native land. Because He made the journey, we can. Because he made the journey, we must try. Because he made the journey, we hope. Because he made the journey, we love. In his day, there was an overlay of appearance that time and space mattered, though this was not true with God, and never is. We now know that the cosmic and existential journey he made from his Conception in the womb of Our Lady to his Ascension, was subject neither to time or space, and therefore it exists and is available for us all to take our parts in, and take them we must.

Yours in the Holy Souls,

The Reverend Canon Barry E. B. Swain, SSC
Superior-General

ANNUAL REQUIEM MASS OF THE GUILD OF ALL SOULS
SATURDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2019 AT 11.00 A.M.

THE CHURCH OF THE ADVENT,
BRIMMER & MOUNT VERNON STREETS,
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

SERMON: THE FATHER SUPERIOR-GENERAL

MUSIC FROM THE ADVENT'S PROFESSIONAL CHOIR:
Tomás Luis de Victoria: *Missa pro defunctis cum sex vocibus (1605)*

LUNCHEON WILL FOLLOW, NO RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

Members may be interested in the previous meetings held at the Advent, Boston:

*Easter Fiesta, 1955, Celebrant: Father Peter Blynn, Curate, Advent, Boston
Sermon: Father Franklin Joiner, Rector, S. Clement's Philadelphia, Superior of the Guild*

*Easter Fiesta, 1993, Celebrant: Father Swain, Rector, S. Clement's Philadelphia and Warden of the Guild
Sermon: Father Andrew Mead, Rector, Church of the Advent*

*Annual Requiem, 2014, Celebrant: Father Warren, Rector Church of the Advent
Sermon: Father Swain, Rector, Church of the Resurrection New York, and Superior-General of the Guild*

Earlier Masses & Annual Meetings (about which we know nothing other than the date!) were held in 1894, 1903, and 1916.

The Advent Branch of the Guild, dedicated to St John the Baptist, was established in 1880 by Father Charles Chapman Grafton SSJE, Rector, who was a member of the Guild's Council as Rector of the Advent, and throughout his entire reign as Bishop of Fond du Lac (1888-1912). Advent's Branch of St John Baptist is among the older ones of the American Guild, and was established just seven years after the Guild was founded in England in 1873, and before the American Region was "granted independence" in 1889 (presumably that declaration would have warmed the hearts of Bostonians!). The Advent was an integral part of the Guild's life in America until the mid-1960s. As with other churches of long tradition, a renewal of interest has come in the new century.

We are delighted to pass along this welcoming message from the Senior Church Warden of The Church of the Advent, C. Thomas Brown, Esq.: